SHE's Literally ME!!!!!

Characters and Gender
By Pom

Featuring the voices of agender, nonbinary, and trans people of all kinds

Introduction!

According to scholars at the Lemkin Institute, trans people are the targets of a genocide. How does this relate to magical girls and Undertale characters?

Every little bit.

In a cis world that is, at best, apathetic to you, ignores a hand when you reach for help, or actively votes and works against your interests, a beacon is everything.

Throughout my life, characters have always marked where I am and where I'm going. Whether it's watching Marceline as a kid and thinking "Man, I wish I looked like her" to my current obsession with Green Yuri and gushing whenever a friend says I look like Mitsuki, characters have helped lead the way.

If you're trans and reading this (Hi hottie!!) you know what I'm talking about.

When I asked for submission on my private insta story, just to hear what people had to say on the subject, I got an avalanche of responses. Some sent a mere sentence, others sent paragraphs.

As of writing I am a proud trans woman....
But I'd be lying if I didn't admit to my envy for Oscar from RoV...

Submission Analysis

Among my received responses were various tied links of fashion styles, "nerdy media" picks and even nonhuman conceptions of gender. Aster (a nonbinary person with they/them pronouns) listed Valerie as a inspo due to her gothic lolita fashion, but also how she transcended "gender and humanity".

Ellie (transwoman who uses she/her pronouns), a deer friend of mine, listed Clarice from the Rankin/Bass Rudolph stop motion special, and I can see it. The interesting thing about animals in media are the various lengths that creators (especially an animator from the 60's) would go to ensure an animal was gendered a particular way. Clarice, through her being a little doe, is gendered in ways beyond markers of the human body through the placement of a bow on her head. Valerie, through her being a human who appears mothlike, also meaningfully transcends human gender, acting as the ultimate fashion statement of rebellion.

"biased because as a kid i was sooo enchanted by them... particularly love valerie's lolita esque design and how strange she is. like she's so feminine but she's beyond gender and humanity." - Aster

Also consistent was a fermentation period between seeing a character, and then being able to attribute them as gender influences. Ellie's list of characters were all from before she was in middle school. Rook, (a nonbinary lesbian who goes by he/they/xe) listed nonbinary Undertale characters uch as Frisk and Chara, characters xe interacted with around a similar time period.

I'm most obsessed with the word Alchemetic (a trans man who uses he/him pronouns) used, that being the word "fascination" as it pertained to androgynous male characters Such as Sheik or Yue from LoZ and Cardcaptor Sakura respectively. Of course over time, Both Rook and Alchemetic reached a point of being able to explain their fascinations, but what is there to say about That fermentation period?

Yue is an extremely rare example of a magical boy. A Queered take on the magical girl genre, opening itself and its genre even wider for trans analysis. No surprise that it's written by CLAMP, a feminist collective that got their start in fan publications...

I certainly had similar “fascinations” with Marceline, Mulan and Rhyme from The World Ends With You (HEAVY ON THE RHYME FASCINATION). All showed me possibilities I couldn’t yet name or comprehend. All of them nonwhite women who challenge typical expressions and manifestations of gender, and all of them guiding me as compass, before I had figured out the language of where I was going. In many ways, that language, that understanding, was a map.

Nomura’s designs really do such a great job at capturing gender nonconforming fashion. Not giving a shit about binary constraints frees his designs to full implementations of Tokyo Street fashion and cultures. In a word, it's sick and trans af. If only his writing was any good...

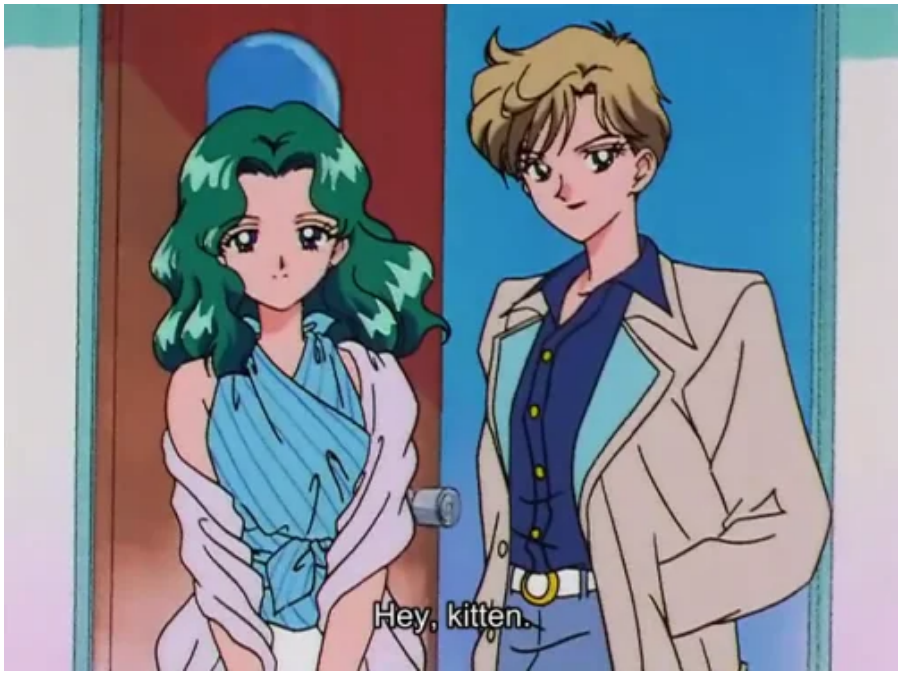
Any queer analysis is incomplete without bringing up magical girls.
For the (sad unfortunate lives we call the) uninitiated, magical girls come from anime and manga traditionally targeted to young female audiences.

They follow girls who typically live a kind of double life, balancing responsibilities from school as well as whatever superheroesque issues of defending the wider world from forces of evil. Iconic to this genre is the transformation, where a character quickly transforms out of their day clothes and into a frilly, feminine costume for fighting evil.

Kyleigh (an agender person who uses they/she pronouns) had the most to say on the subject.

Haruka (aka as Sailor Uranus from Sailor Moon) was listed as a large gender inspo. Haruka isn't only a lesbian icon, but acts in many ways as a gender nonconforming character, navigating both her masc base form, and a feminine magical girl form, complete with short skirts and a big bow. This is what was so empowering, a masculine person who feels free to dress more femmine, and for whom, possibly, there wasn't any contradiction in the two.

"While Haruka is more masculine, he's also comfortable as Sailor Uranus and being more feminine and I think that was really healing."
- Kyleigh



For most magical girls, there tends to be an arc focused on coming to terms with the responsibilities and realities of being a magical girl, leaving characters to quite literally negotiate newgendered livelihoods in community. So trans.

Self Confessions

Clem
(Telltale's The Walking Dead)

First is my namesake. Multiracial, queer, carrying a hatchet
and covered in blood. The kind of girl who grew up taking shit, and is now exhausted.
She's sewn her own stitches, has made the hardest decisions
a kid could make. Fuck with her, I dare you!

Clem was a hurt kid doing all it took to survive in a broken world.
This resonated a lot with me. She was the survivor model I needed
when all the typical role models of youth routinely failed me. Yeah,
Little Clem (talking about me this time) needed that, I still try to do
right by her.

I once had a professor who worked on these games, and he certainly
knew I was named after her cuz he asked me for analysis in a class cold call.
Really fucking embarassing.

Racoons
(As in the animal)

Dumpster diving, eyeliner wearing folk punks, the kind that smell of cigarettes and make their own hrt.

Resilient survivors that manage to make dumpster diving cute. Idk, whenever I see racoons nowadays or anything racoon related I'm reminded of our current moment, and what being trans means at a time of genocide. It's taking everything you can, its surviving, it's moving around at night. Raccoons are strong creatures, I try to channel them when I can.

Yes, this is fursona related. Yes, I will one day get a tail and some ears. No, you're not getting anything else outta me.

Raccoons are almost always posted with vodka or cigarettes meaning I'm not crazy and other people see them as at least punk adjacent. I win, you lose.

Faye
(Chungking Express)

Faye is definitely a manic pixie dream girl which is a gross and misogynistic archetype, HOWEVER, the way she danced to California Dreamin always got to me.

There's a video essay or promo or whatever with Quintin Tarantino coked up talking about her love for Faye's dance. He describes it as a reason for his crush on her, which is a typical Tarantino's response, but to me what's magical is the hypnotism.

Faye is a yearner of catastrophic levels who wants to be anywhere except where she is in the present moment. She's kinda impulsive, and if she were a man, we would call that something romantic like "grabbing life by the horns."

She knows what she wants, she knows this life if all we have. She'll take a beat to think if she wants something, maybe if it's worth it. Then she'll grab it.

How could you not wanna be her?

"Do you like loud music?"
"Yes, the louder the better. Then I don't have to think"
"So you don't like to think?"
Shake of the head indicating no

Kuromi
(Sanrio)

Cute mischievous imp. Mostly black and white, sometimes with purple highlights, always a shit eating grin. Most definitely designed in a lab for girls who dragged their dad to Hot Topic as a kid. (me)

I own too much kuromi merch, at least 3 plushies, a purse, fridge magnets, too many stickers, two necklaces, and a skateboard I would've gotten the Overwatch skin but I never play Widowmaker. (Juno main!!)

What's most appealing about Kuromi is her playfulness. She's a little shit. And at the risk of over intellectualizing Kuromi, what I love about her is that she's a mischievous brat in the cutest, most femme way. Getting drunk on a weeknight? Calling off work and feigning sickness? Kuromi says thats femme shit, go have fun girl.

Kuromi, you feminist icon.

If this doesn't sell it nothing will...

Final Thoughts

Characters are more than pixels or words on a page. They're more than mascots or designs to sell merch, they are ideas given life. They're manifestations of ideologies, philosophies and entire ways of being, from the most basic of mascots to the characters you find in *the classics.*

Intentional or not, they are gendered ways of being. Ways of being to grab and hold onto even before you know the language to describe your own.

Characters are the compass we keep when forging the maps of our identities.

May we hold our compasses close in such a time of targeted violence. May we never lose sight of where we've been, where we're going, Where we hope to be.

I know you'll reach that place soon.

A zine in which a transexual talks about her fursona, Kuromi, girls from video games and some other intellectualized self indulgent nonsense

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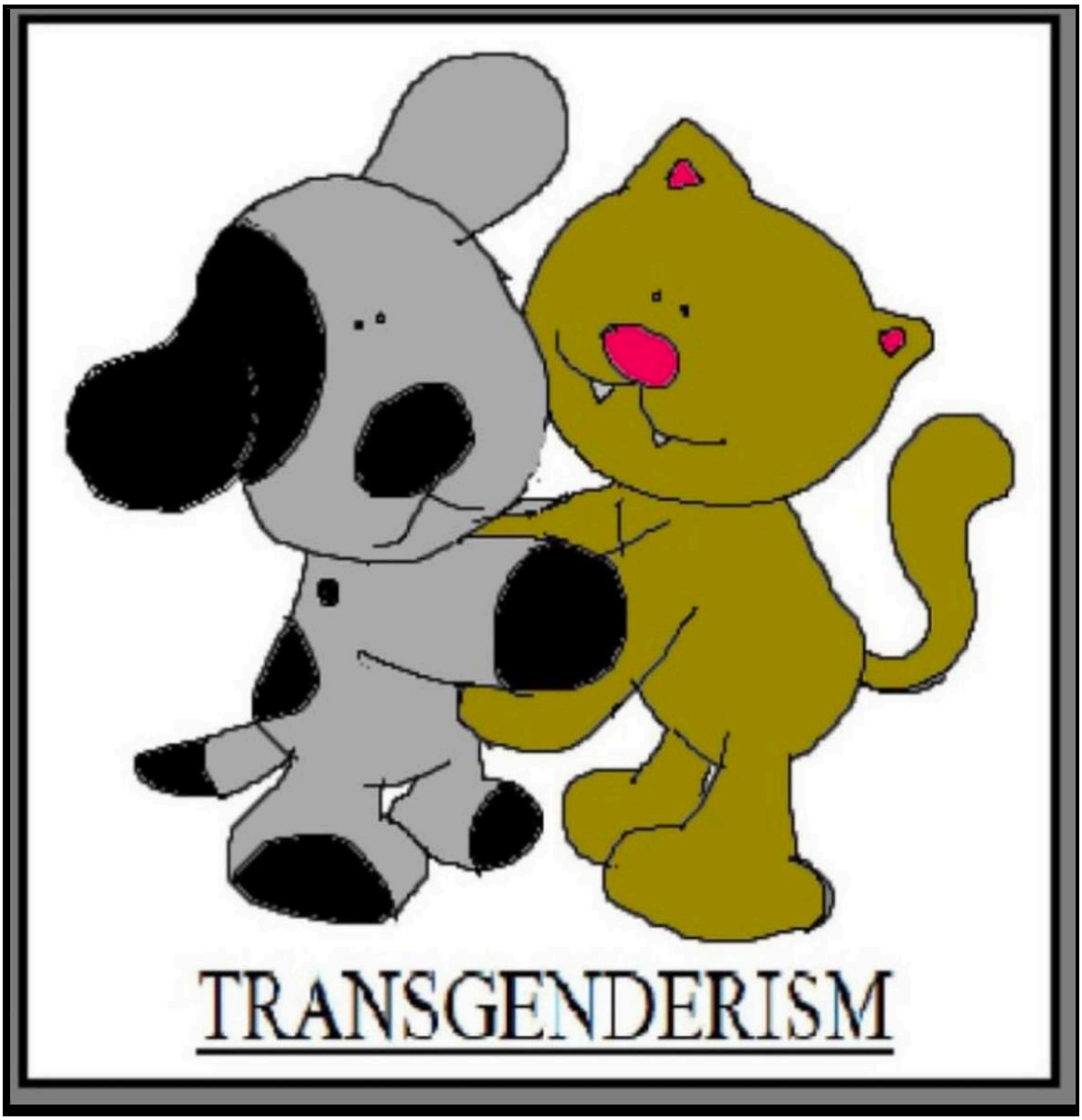

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